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Connecticut Chapter
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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Judiciary Committee
April 4, 2011
Testimony in Support of
HB 6557 AAC Liability For The Recreational Use Of Lands

Attached is the original testimony of 123 Connecticut residents in support of HB 6557 as forwarded to the Sierra Club for submission to the Committee. It is submitted unedited, but printed together in order to save paper.

Barbara O'Neill
Kristen Volinski, Avon
Julie McNeill & family, Avon
Sue Durant, Avon
Kristen Grant, Avon
Kathleen Miller, Bethlehem
Anne Farnum, Bloomfield
James R. Bradley, Bloomfield
Andrew King, Bloomfield
Becky DeAngelo, Branford
Beatrice Wallerstein, Branford
Chris Rocanello, Bristol
Marcia Wilkins, Brookfield
Steve Morrell, Burlington
Chris Hindman, Canton
Cathy Hinckley, Chaplin
Lin Napolitano, Cheshire
John P. Carey, Clinton
John A. Pagnani, Psy. D., Colchester
Jeanne R. Jones, Colebrook
Chris Vonkeyserling, Cos Cob
Phoebe Griffith, Cos Cob
Jane Herschlag & Herbert Herschlag,
Danbury
Anna Zancan, Danbury
Edwin A. Rosenberg, Danbury
Jennifer Frank, East Granby
Bob Ballek, East Haddam
Sarah Donovan, Easton
Karen LaPlante, Enfield
Brian Kerrigan, Essex
Christine Brown, Fairfield
Andrew M. Crowe, Fairfield

Stephen J. Clubb, Farmington
Jo Sharon, Glastonbury
Dennis Desmarais, Glastonbury
Luther Weeks, Glastonbury
Lauren Russell, Greenwich
Lissa Bentley, Greenwich
John D. Kelly, Guilford
Emily Anhalt, Guilford
Morgan Dysinger, Hamden
David Bruhn, Hamden
Richard Walser, Hamden
Chris Marchand, Hamden
Mary Tyrrell, Hamden
Lydia Williams, Madison
Laura Jarett, Madison
Theodore Strickland, Madison
Ethan Giller, Madison
Geoff Giller, Madison
C. Thomas Paul, Madison
Don Rankin, M.D., Madison
William H. Walling, Madison
David James, Meriden
Ginny Chirsky, Meriden
Annaita Gandhy, Middletown
David Minnick, Middletown
William J. Earls, Middletown
Mike Wallace, Monroe
Lois Spence, Monroe
Don Parker-Burgard, Monroe
Michael Sheehan, Moosup
Michael Lefebvre, Morris
Molly McKay, Mystic
Walter Grant, Mystic

Mr. Robin Fryer, New Canaan
Lee Grimes Evans, New Canaan
Emily Nissley, New Canaan
Alanna Rathbone, New Canaan
Kerri Ahern, New Fairfield
Timothy J. Robinson, PhD, New Haven
Louise Fabrykiewicz, New London
Tom O'Brien, New Milford
Mady Kenny, Newington
Rick Kuzoian, Newington
Chris Thomas-Melly, Newington
Robert E. Batson, Newington
Madeline Jeffery, North Stonington
Jennifer Eazarsky, Norwalk
Roberta Paro, Norwich
Louise Brodman, Old Greenwich
Rise Siegel, Orange
James H. Ewen, Orange
John Hughes, Pawcatuck
Mark DeVoe, Plainville
Jake DeSantis, Redding
Douglas P. Taber, Redding
Victoria Yolen, Ridgefield
Susan Baker, Ridgefield
Ellen Burns, Ridgefield
Benjamin Oko, Ridgefield
Roberta Immordino, Sharon
Bill Dyer, Shelton
Ralph Riello, South Meriden
Noah Toth, Southbury

Allen Horner, Southington
Dan Wilensky, Southington
Sue Kienle, Southington
Peter Picone, Southington
Lee Chevron, Stamford
Roger Chaffin, Storrs
Roswell and Gretchen Hall, Storrs
Marty Deren, Suffield
Bob Carr, Thomaston
Tim Ryan, Trumbull
Cathy Rubin Jim Levola, Voluntown
Luda Gooper, West Hartford
Claire L Zick, West Hartford
Peter Herrmann, West Hartford
Jim Sutton, West Hartford
Sonia Plumb, Herb Emanuelson, Alex
Emanuelson, West Hartford
Richard Stanley, West Simsbury
Dave Muller, Weston
William N. Wallace, Westport
Sheila C. O'Neill, Westport
Clarinda Higgins, Westport
Diane Cady, Westport
Tracey McDougall, Wethersfield
Royal Graves, Wethersfield
Michael and Susan Cutlip, Willimantic
Ellen Kapustka, PhD, Wilton
Doug Miller, Winsted
Sandra Cox, Woodbury

I am in support of the state lands remaining open for recreation, it would be a crime to close them because of liability issues.

Barbara O'Neill

The municipal lands open to the public are an essential part of my life in Connecticut. I use these lands at least 3-4 times a week spring through fall. In the winter I use that trails as the weather allows.

These trails and lakes are real Connecticut gems. They are a great place to see wild life as well. I have had to stop to allow bear, deer, turkeys, quail, and even a few a slow moving turtles cross the trail. I have even seen blue heron and a bald eagle perched in the trees near the river. Needless to say I am very thankful to the FVTC and MDC for all of their efforts in maintaining this open space. If these lands were to close due fear of law suits, my physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health would be harmed. Please keep them open. Not just for me but for the health of our entire community.

Sue Durant

1 Muirfield Lane

Avon, CT 06001

In this day of rising childhood and adult obesity it is unfathomable that anyone would consider reducing access to public lands for recreational purposes. My family and I have been enjoying the forests and rivers of this area for decades and our outdoor recreation is a key piece of our lives together. One of the reasons my family and I decided to settle in this area is our access to the public lands and forests in the area, including the MDC property in West Hartford. Consider the economic impact of making our towns that much less desirable a place to live.

Kristen Grant

434 New Rd.

Avon, 06001

I decided to write a testimony for the proposed bill because the land in and around my hometown will always be extremely important to me. The parks, rivers, and trails are a defining feature of our little slice of New England. I once had a friend from Maine come to visit, and the first thing she said was, "It looks like National Geographic here!" Losing these resources would be tragic for residents, who depend on them for making memories with their families, exercising and bonding over nature (as corny as that may sound, I've done it many times).

I've grown up with this open land, and every time I'm home from school I depend on it to remind me how lucky I am to live in such a beautiful setting. In college I am pursuing a career in Environmental Studies because I grew up skipping rocks, picnicking, biking, and running in the public spaces that define a good deal of my childhood, and I want to make sure it is always available for communities, who always benefit from it. It would be a shame for any section of this well-loved land to be removed from public use, and Connecticut would certainly change for the worse.

Kristen Volinski

Boston College Class of 2014

Avon, CT

Our family have spent many wonderful weekends going for hikes on public land, including Hublein Tower in the spectacular fall, People's Forest and our annual New Year's Day hike around Fisher Meadow to name just a few of the places. This is precious family time, all the harder to pull off as the children get older and get pulled in so many ways with their activities, but nevertheless snatched and so far, looked forward to by all, especially the family dog!

I can't imagine not being able to enjoy these hikes, one of the few activities both my husband and I participate in together! We live near the trail and I use it several days a week when it is not snow covered. I really appreciate the trail and I include it in one of the huge positives of my neighborhood in Avon. In an instant you are one with nature, a truly blessed thing to have on your doorstep.

We are in favor of town liability protection.

Julie McNeill & family
30 Charing Cross
Avon, CT 06001

I walk every morning with my dog through the small woodlands and the remaining fields where I live. This is my way to stay balanced, joyful and whole. I teach young children in a public school. These morning walks inform my whole day with a good positive healthy outlook on life. Many discoveries or musings from these walks I share with my students. I have encountered fox, deer, black bear, skunk, pileated woodpeckers, box turtles(long ago), red eft newts, stag horn beetles, wooly caterpillars, star nose moles.....the list goes on and on. Often my students learn and study, and create art and stories from these finds. The wealth of these natural places is irreplaceable. We must keep them in our human lives to remain whole and balanced. We must keep them in our environmental lives to sustain us. We are not a singular entity, we are part of a system. We must protect the land we are a part of.

Kathleen Miller
544 Carmel Hill Rd. N
Bethlehem, CT 06751

Connecticut's open spaces provide a vital and reinvigorating environment for state residents. I hike and bike the local trails in the greater Hartford area and find that they provide me with an ever-renewing appreciation of nature. And what better way is there to get good exercise? Without such spaces, cycling and hiking would be dull and unadventurous. But with them, I feel refreshed when I return, ready to continue my work. These areas must be preserved not only for humans but also for the vast variety of wildlife that makes them their homes.

Andrew King
3 Rundelane
Bloomfield, CT

I think that it makes good sense and serves justice to restore liability protection to towns and agencies like the MDC. Access to public land is a privilege for all to enjoy. It provides an opportunity for exercise and the enjoyment of nature to walkers, cyclists, etc. Mishaps will occur, some are perhaps preventable if due caution is taken by those making use of the land; others, like losing one's footing (normally causing no serious injury) are bound to happen. In the first case, primary responsibility rests with victim; in the second, hopefully the victim's

expenses will be covered by private insurance and any distress will be accepted as a part of life.

Publish and, where possible, post safety rules and liability disclaimers. On one occasion, I forgot my bicycle helmet and was turned away by guards at the West Hartford reservoir. There was no argument from me although when I was growing up no one would have expected, let alone demanded, that I have one.

James R. Bradley

7 Westview Drive Apt G

Bloomfield, CT 06002

I am writing today express my strong support for S.B. 831 before the Environment Committee restoring liability protection to municipalities. Municipalities and municipal entities like the MDC must have total immunity from liability lawsuits filed by citizens using MDC property for recreational, or any other, purpose.

I have lived in this area for most of my 61 years, and have used MDC reservoir property and woodland trails year round over that span of years. It has been a place that I treasured. Access to these areas greatly contributed to my quality of life at all stages: as a young child in a young family, as a teenager, as an adult, and now as an elder. The reservoir was, and is, a place where friends can go to meet for a beautiful, peaceful walk and great conversation. It's a place where we can commune with nature; ponder life's questions deeply, and make important choices and decisions; where we can regenerate and renew ourselves - releasing the heavy stresses of everyday life.

This beautiful area has always been openly available to everyone for free. Myself, and the family and friends that I've shared experiences on MDC property with, always understood clearly that we were responsible for our own actions; and that we used this precious resource at our own risk. It is a shame, and a sign of weakening of our character as a community, that some people no longer feel they should take responsibility for their own actions, even when that attitude means that they rob the greater community of a crucial asset. It was a grave mistake for the court to award damages to an irresponsible biker. It is untenable for the MDC to be exposed to liability from anyone who is reckless, or even just unlucky; and who then refuses to be responsible for their own actions. Without legislation to provide total immunity from lawsuits, I believe the MDC will have no choice but to close off citizen access to their properties.

And that would be a great loss to residents of all the surrounding towns. Hundreds of thousands of citizens each year used MDC property to commune with nature, and for active recreation. These properties are an irreplaceable jewel and a tremendous asset to all these people. Given our high stress, fast paced lives, they are also an essential asset. Nearby spots where we can meet friends, enjoy nature, regenerate, and gain perspective are rare. The fact that these beautiful areas have been open to all - young and old, all income levels, all races, nationalities and creeds - also makes them a major foundation for peaceful connection among the diverse peoples of our communities. It would be a great tragedy, and a significant diminishment of our quality of life, to lose all the value that these beautiful areas provide. And it would be an additional tragedy to provide further support to the forces of irresponsibility and greed.

Anne Farnum

14 Stratford Park

Bloomfield, CT

I cannot imagine living without the joys of the outdoors. Fields and streams, hills and dales....walking outdoors daily lifts my spirits. The early spring when the earth wakes up again, the days' ends in early summer when the chatter among the many birds is music to our ears, glimpsing occasional wilder animals (a fox this a.m.)...Roaming amongst the wonders that nature provides is a joy and a treat. And it keeps my doctor happy too.

Thank you for ensuring access to these wonderful areas.

Beatrice Wallerstein
88 Quarry Dock Rd
Branford, CT

This bill is important for New Haven Inner City Outings. We take the kids hiking on open space owned by many groups, including municipalities. It would be a shame to not have the ability to explore these areas, further limiting options for exposure to nature for these children.

Becky DeAngelo
489 Leetes Island Rd
Branford, CT

The use of these public and other lands is HUGE to the quality of life not only for myself, but my family and friends and most of the people I know. Please correct this absurdity and do what is right by the majority of citizens who responsibly use these areas. Thank you, Chris Rocanello

55 Beths Ave. Apt. 69
Bristol, CT

As a citizen concerned about public use of open space in our state I urge the legislature to restore liability protection for the towns and quasi-public agencies. The present absence of liability protection will inevitably lead to more lawsuits eventually resulting in local closings of the property to the public. This situation defeats the purpose of setting aside parcels for the public to enjoy. Potential donors may view the restrictions as a reason not to donate their land in the future.

Connecticut can be proud of the success of its open space program. There is no good reason not to restore full liability protection. The present state is detrimental to the program and will lead to its decline.

Please do vote for full liability protection for all towns and quasi-public agencies.

Thank you.

Marcia Wilkins
56 Flax Hill Road
Brookfield, CT 06804

The great outdoors should be protected from lawsuits and liability from the not so great lawyers and individuals who may be injured due to their negligence. Riding a bike the wrong way on a bike path is the riders fault, not the MDC. Slipping on acorns should not be a reason to sue, does the injured party think acorns do not fall from trees or that they should be all picked up

by the town. We all need to take a breath and breeze in the outdoor air and take responsibility for our actions. The outdoors should be available to those that like to ride bikes, hike, walk, swim, fish, boat, run, etc and the towns and districts should not be liable for an injury, as long as it is not an obvious lack of care or maintenance. I walk my neighborhood street for a four mile walk picking up other people's garbage along the way. Should I have the right to sue all those littering or the town if I get injured?

Steve Morrell

41 Middle Croft Rd

Burlington, CT 06013

I'm the owner and co-publisher of Natural Nutmeg Magazine, a local monthly health and wellness publication based in Avon with distribution throughout CT. I received your email on the legislative alert, I'm somewhat familiar with the case involving the W. Hartford biker but honestly have not heard much about this since that judgement. Many of us here at the magazine are long time users of many of the MDC properties in Hartford and surrounding areas and would hate to see that opportunity be taken away. Unfortunately, we are unavailable to attend the public hearing however we wanted to offer a paragraph written by my Editor in Chief, Deb Percival, from all of us here at Natural Nutmeg. If there is anything else we might be able to do, please let us know.

Chris Hindman

31 Meadow View Ct

Canton, CT 06001

I greatly value the opportunities to explore new areas via hiking or kayaking or just bird watching, dog walking, the out of doors should belong to us all and we should all be responsible for the way in which we use it.

Cathy Hinckley

Palmer rd.

Chaplin CT

It is very important to be able to continue to enjoy access to open space such as forests, meadows, trails, parks, and rivers of Connecticut. This availability for walking and hiking is a stress reliever, as well as, a benefit to my overall health at the age of 59. As a resident of the state of Connecticut I want this availability open to all citizens. The liability protection is important in supporting this option to good health. The health of our Connecticut community is at risk. Please support this protection for our municipalities.

Lin Napolitano

975 Moss Farms Road

Cheshire, CT 06410

Of course it is extremely important to keep open spaces in Connecticut. Is this something that needs heady discussion? Doesn't common sense dictate. Sometimes these judicial decisions seem void of good ole common sense. We, and I mean all of us, are merely guardians of these open lands. We must keep them open and available for us and our future. Once these spaces are unavailable it is just the beginning of the end. Down the road they will be developed and lost

forever. For us, the animals, trees, nature, they must be shown how important it is to protect these areas and the people that allow us access.

John P. Carey
54 Jefferson Cir
Clinton, CT

I deeply enjoy the peace and relaxation of walking, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing on public access land owned by the towns in Connecticut. I have always understood doing a privilege and was at my own risk. It has come to my attention that there have been some lawsuits by people who do not want to use the privilege at their own risk. My suggestion is that they stay away from public access recreation with the trial lawyers who who are way to willing to sue anyone for a third of the take. Sadly, such irresponsible legal actions hurt responsible people who gratefully enjoy the privelege to use the land. Kindly restore town liability protection, just as the state, land trusts, corporations and other private landowners have had for years before it is too late. Towns and the MDC should be able to keep their open space available for the public to enjoy without fear of the greedy closing it down through lawsuits that make them money. This will save money on insurance premiums and the costs of litigation.

John A. Pagnani, Psy. D.
32 Hungerford road
Colchester, CT 06415

I am writing to affirm your and the Sierra Club's sentiments that public lands must continue to be available to the public of our great state. I urge the legislature to enact the act referred to above in order to protect local municipalities from law suits of liability.

As one who has protected a large parcel of family land in New Hartford by selling it to the town with covenants, I have proven how much I believe in public access to undeveloped forests.

Please urge the legislature take the future of our children into account. Otherwise, they may live in a world devoid of the natural world.

Jeanne R. Jones
22 Millbrook Road
Colebrook, CT 06021

Having open space in my town has been a very important aspect of my life. Furthermore, having access to that open space is a vital part of my health and well-being, both for physical reasons and for mental & emotional reasons. I am a regular user of the parks in my town: I ride my bicycle almost every day in warmer weather. Being able to do so in parks instead of on the more hazardous roadways has meant safety to me as well as cardiovascular health. In the winter and in rainy or cold weather, I enjoy hiking for my health, and again, being able to walk on trails in town parks is preferable to walking alongside roads where the pollution from motor vehicles is ever present. In addition to my safety and health, this access to open space enriches my life in so many more ways...I enjoy keeping track of the seasonal changes in the landscape and in watching the migration of birds through our region. Having exposure to nature in all of its many moods keeps me connected to the earth and its rhythms, and helps remind me how important it is to care for it.

Please ensure that the open spaces in our towns can remain available to the public!
Phoebe Griffith
31 Sinawoy Rd
Cos Cob, CT

Please support legislation which restores legal protection to municipalities for their open space and parklands.

The proper balance of open space and parkland in our town is an essential component in growing and maintaining the Town's Grand List. As you know, since property tax is the main life blood of our municipalities, the Grand List is the medical record of the financial health. Acquisition and maintenance of parkland is one of the cheapest remedies for a town in these financially strapped times.

Not only does open space bolster the residential values, but it mitigates the infrastructure expense of land base "build out". Every acre developed into residential use requires a direct increase and further investment in the public infrastructure and services of schools, sewers, fire and police, etc.

Open space/ parkland requires one of the lowest carrying cost to a municipal budget of all public service components. Even the capital investment cost of purchase is often avoided or reduced by gift or public subscription. The largest financial concern of public open space/ parkland is the legal liability of "slip and fall" suits. Many municipalities avoid acquisition of such properties to reduce the exposure to serious million dollars settlements. Even the simple legal defense costs in a successful defense become a major expense and budget consideration.

It is unconscionable that the only real barrier to beneficial, public open space is an unnecessary liability. Falling on acorns? Skating on thin ice? Twisting an ankle on a hiking path? Private properties are protected against a silly lack of personal responsibility and common sense. Public parkland cannot be treated as an "attractive nuisance".

Please pass legislation which holds municipalities harmless and makes users responsible for their own actions.

Chris Vonkeyserling
P.O.Box 35
Cos Cob, CT 06807

As an old-timer (I am now 86, and no longer as active as I once was), I occasionally get out into open spaces, and particularly need access to the state's trails in its parks and other walking/hiking routes. To me it is wrong to deny younger people the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and to learn the benefits of healthful activities. I hope that towns and other agencies will be given liability protection so open space is not kept closed. Sincerely,

Edwin A. Rosenberg
24 Silcam Drive
Danbury, CT 06811

My children and I have spent many hours and clocked many miles in the woods, fields and trails of Connecticut's open spaces. They are a living classroom that can open one's eyes and mind to history, science, art and the music of nature. I home-schooled my youngest son and these open spaces were the classrooms of choice. There is not a building that could have inspired the

learning and the love of earth and sky that was acquired during our adventures outdoors. These experiences will last a life time for my family and myself.

Anna Zancan
18 Southern Blvd
Danbury, ct

I feel that it is essential that towns and agencies, such as the MDC in the Hartford area, are afforded the same protections as and owners of open space. We need these spaces for public use and enjoyment, not for litigious people. Recreational use of public lands is here for the many, and should not be subject to unfair litigation by the few. Their funds should be for the maintenance of the public lands, not to either insurance company coffers or lawyers coffers.

Jane Herschlag & Herbert Herschlag
47 Saddle Rock Road
Danbury, CT 06811

I think it is important to protect municipalities who allow access to their recreational lands from litigation, so that these areas will remain open and available to the public. There are many land areas that provide a wide variety of healthy, passive recreation activities that are safely enjoyed by many people. We are a "fat" society that really needs to get outdoors. Please keep these land areas open for us to use and enjoy. Please revise the law to give the municipalities the protection they need from frivolous lawsuits. That woman bicyclist should never have won that case.

Jennifer Frank
7 Valley View Drive
East Granby, CT 06026

I want to express my 100% endorsement of this bill which will relieve public entities from liability and the need for expensive insurance and litigation fees for lawsuits which basically only benefit the lawyers and insurance companies, while ultimately resulting in restricted access to open space for those of us who enjoy open space.

Bob Ballek
88 Ray Hill Rd.
East Haddam, Ct 06423

My name is Sarah Donovan, and I have lived in Easton Connecticut for 22 years. In Easton we have a great deal of watershed and town owned protected open space. One of the joys of living in Easton is exploring these areas of natural beauty. Yes, one must pay attention when one is walking in the woods, but even so sometimes accidents happen. It is crucially important that the state legislature specifically protect towns and quasi agencies, such as the Town of Easton and Aspetuck Land Trust from law suits stemming from persons taking known and calculated risks of using open space areas. This would be especially important in our town, where some generous individuals have offered property or preservation easements to the Town, and have been turned away because of the town's concern about liability issues. Let's make it as easy as possible to preserve open space in Connecticut!

Sarah Donovan
103 North Park Avenue

Easton, CT 06612

The Town of Enfield has valuable open space and recreational space. A greenway has been established along the Scantic River and is hiked regularly by residents and non residents alike. This land is a combination of private, State and Town owned properties. These places are enjoyed because of the natural state of the area. Whether it is bird watching, dog walking, or searching for wildflowers, anyone can enjoy the wildlife in their natural and relatively untouched environment in most of these open space areas. It is important that the liability protection be restored to municipalities to avoid any unnecessary liability issues. Hiking, walking, biking, canoeing and other outdoor activities are all activities that one chooses in an uncontrolled environment that includes certain risks. When one chooses these activities, they should be ready to accept the risks associated with these environments. It is impossible for towns to maintain all of the properties in pristine condition. These properties should be open to all that choose to take the risks associated with the activities. Without legislative protection towns may choose the liability is too great and will close access to open space which would be devastating. The legislature should pass H.B. 6557 and protect municipalities from liability for the recreational use of lands.

Karen LaPlante

Chair, Enfield Conservation Commission

166 N. Maple St.

Enfield, CT 06082

The \$3M judgement last year is having far reaching effects. I organize and run two whitewater slalom races in Connecticut each year, one of them is on the Farmington River between Collinsville and Unionville, called the Punchbrook Slalom. We have contacts within water control to help us with flows at these races. I just found out that because of the lost judgment at MDC that they will no longer be taking requests to adjust water levels.

Quote from my contact at MDC:

> On an unrelated note, I had a long conversation with Tim Anthony (MDC water control). He's been hearing from the MDC higher-ups that the era of adjusting water levels for events is basically over because of the liability factor. The West Hartford Reservoir (mountain-biking) suit has made them very paranoid.

This has to stop. People not taking responsibility of injury for their own enjoyment of the outdoors. Lawyers are making the money, without using common sense of the future effects, over frivolous suits that will effect everyone to the point that there will no longer be anywhere we can go to hike, bike or paddle all because some idiots could not watch where they were walking or biking.

Who looses in the end because of an acorn and law suits? We all do!

Brian Kerrigan

3 Waterside lane

Essex, CT 06426

The town of Fairfield, where I live, owns a lot of open space. Residents consider this land to be one of the most valuable assets of our town. We all know this abundance of open space is a significant reason our property values remain high. Not only does my family use it -

we walk the beach, we walk in the woods, but TONS of my friends use this land to get out in nature without having to drive miles and miles. It seems like everyone in town has hiked on town-owned land, either to relax, to get exercise or to walk their dog. My children have fished in the rivers and played in the woods at a time when these resources are becoming scarcer and scarcer. At a time when obesity is becoming a national epidemic, we need the ability to exercise out of doors and most people don't own gigantic 2+ acre properties where we can do this in our own backyard. Nor would necessarily we want to. Being with others as part of a caring community is vital to mental health.

There are risks to everything in life. When taking a walk on town-owned land, there is a risk of having an accident. Provided one is warned of an unnatural or unusual risks, provided the town has not set traps designed to intentionally injure people, treat us like adults and let us accept that risk in exchange for the benefit of being able to enjoy the land. Let's not let lawsuits run amok and spoil the ability of everyone else to enjoy the bounty of nature for free.

Christine Brown
159 Hollydale Road
Fairfield, CT 06824

Thanks for asking me to support liability protection for public open lands. I love being able to walk various trails in Connecticut - enjoying the beautiful scenery our state has to offer. I am very concerned that a few non-civic minded people who through no fault of anyone in particular, have the need to "blame" and then seek financial restitution from someone else (in this case, the town, state or federal government). We all need to take responsibility for our own actions. I have slipped on acorns while walking through the woods - my biggest concern was hoping that no one else saw me being so clumsy. In a natural environment, one would expect acorns to be on the ground and should take that into consideration when walking. Public lands should be covered for liability from those bringing forth a frivolous lawsuit. We have worked very hard over the years to set aside these lands for our collective enjoyment - it would be a shame to prohibit the public from using those lands because of the threat of potential lawsuits.

Andrew M. Crowe
103 Colonial Dr.
Fairfield, CT 06824

As a resident of the state and a user of the MDC property I believe it is imperative that this property remain accessible to all.

There are too few properties that remain open space and that can be used as a recreational space.

Keep the access to the MDC property open. I have enjoyed access to this area for many years and hope to do so in the future.

Stephen J. Clubb
97 Farmington Chase
Farmington, CT. 06032

For several years I worked in Farmington and enjoyed walking several times a week during lunch hours in the MDC, it was a wonderful experience, healthy physically and mentally. I would hope that similar experiences would continue to be available to everyone. Unfortunately, I can also understand why it would be difficult for the MDC to provide access to the public

without open space liability protection. Please extend them this protection.

Luther Weeks

334 Hollister Way West

Glastonbury, CT 06033

As a parent of two young girls, it would be a disappointment at many levels if we find that many of our favorite outdoor destinations close their doors to the public. My wife and I take advantage of the forests, trails, streams, and parks throughout the year as an opportunity to build stronger family bonds between our children, undistracted from the buzz of our normal hectic lives. Outdoor activities like hiking and biking have helped to strengthen our children's bodies and minds at a time when many of their friends remain indoors, parked in front of the television. The beautiful vistas and scenic routes we've experienced as a family have given us all a greater appreciation of what Connecticut has to offer, making us all better stewards of this state's land.

And lastly, the open spaces we've frequented at places like the MDC properties have helped us instill the lesson of personal accountability with our children. Upon learning of the \$3M judgement, we made a point to help reinforce the message to our children that the road of life is full of bumps and potholes. When one of those obstacles knocks you off your bike or causes you to take a tumble on the trail, the best thing you can do is to dust yourself off, and then pay more attention to the road ahead next time around.

Please provide the towns and quasi agencies the protection that they need to keep their doors open to such an important part of our lives.

Thanks.

Dennis Desmarais

252 Wood Pond

Glastonbury, CT 06033

Sadly my health no longer lets me hike, but my daughter and her seven- year-old and their dog have hiked every trail and dirt road within a thirty mile radius and they would be really distressed if any of them were closed. Hiking is one of their favorite things to do together. I just looked through our photos on the computer and there are a lot of "views from the top of the hill".

Jo Sharon

93 Curtis Rd.

Glastonbury CT

Open space in Connecticut provides my husband and I with a sanctuary from the day to day, and also serves as the forum for our relationship with nature. I relish the contrast between our city-driven weekdays and our weekends where the trails in Connecticut keep us connected to the important things. Please keep these trails available to the public. They make a huge difference in our lives.

Lauren Russell

Greenwich, CT

It is very important to my health and well being to have access to open spaces. I hike (with my 6 year old child) and I bike, and restriction of access to spaces for these activities would impact me (and many people) negatively. I believe that we should be allowed to enjoy

and reap the benefits of our natural resources. Getting out in nature is one of the best ways to stay healthy. Please ask the legislature to restore town liability protection!

Thank you,
Lissa Bentley
8 Putnam Park
Greenwich, CT 06830

As a long-time resident of Guilford, CT and a Connecticut business owner, I support the legislative efforts to extended to municipalities and other government or nongovernmental organizations the protection from liability enjoyed by private landowners when making private or municipal lands accessible to the public for recreational purposes. One of the most valuable assets that the Town of Guilford and other communities offer to their citizens is access to a wide array of parks, woodlands and land trust properties. Most users understand and accept the risks involved in a walk in the park or a bike ride along a woodland trail. It would be a shame to lose access to these areas as a result of those few people who refuse to take responsibility for their own actions. Please support "H.B. 6557 An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands" and ensure that we can continue to enjoy the open space that is so important to our quality of life here in Connecticut.

John D. Kelly
617 Durham Road
Guilford, CT

Thank you very much for martialling support for H.B. 6557. I walk and run the trails in Guilford, CT several times a week and also ride my horse on trails in Durham, CT. Today during my run in the woods, I saw a Fisher Cat for the first time in my life. It was much more exciting than any "virtual" experience. Do we really want to become a society deriving our pleasures exclusively from flickering electronic screens? Access to the beautiful open spaces of CT enhances the experience of all residents and also draws newcomers and tourists to the state. Local government can and must protect collective interests threatened by the greed of irresponsible individuals and the trial lawyers' lobby.

Emily Anhalt
117 Orcutt Drive
Guilford, CT 05437

I strongly support the proposed legislation to protect towns and water authorities from liability if they allow public access to their land free of charge. As an avid hiker, I appreciate the opportunity to hike through Connecticut's forests and fields along wonderful trails, almost all on both public and private property. It's a unique system here in Connecticut that we can walk through the woods without barriers of property boundaries. Nothing is risk-free, and if we want more people to enjoy the outdoors, and if a landowner allows free access, then I feel strongly that there should be no liability on the part of the landowner for accidents or mishaps.

Mary Tyrrell
Hamden, CT

Open spaces are the least expensive means to ensuring a good quality of life for all of

Connecticut residents. As a board member of the New Haven Land Trust, I've been committed to preserving open spaces even in urban settings. The Farmington Canal trail is another example of a relatively low cost, high return means of improving peoples lives.

Protecting landowners of open space from liability in exchange for public access is a sensible and necessary policy. It is a public benefit without a public cost. I strongly urge the legislature to restore protections for towns so they too can continue to offer this valuable resource to its residents.

Richard Walser
64 North Lake Drive
Hamden, CT 06517

As a resident of Hamden, CT, I would like to submit my full support for H.B 6557, An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands.

It is imperative to restore protections to CT municipalities against frivolous litigation regarding citizen use of public open spaces.

Our children are at great risk of being denied access to the many wonderful opportunities these spaces provide.

Thank you.
Chris Marchand
171 Hubbard Road
Hamden, CT 06517

I am a long term resident of Hamden, Ct. Over the years my family and I have enjoyed the varied parks, pathways, and hiking trails that are available to us in my town. We frequent the Farmington Canal, the Quinnipiac Trail, and Sleeping Giant State Park. We enjoy running and hiking on these trails which provides much needed exercise and having access to them encourages us to get outside and enjoy quality family time together. Last year we bought a few kayaks and brought them to Lake Wintergreen for some excursions on the water which is exhilarating and allows us to be closer to nature. I could not image not having these outlets available to us and we deserve the opportunity to use them. It would be a shame if we were limited due to the reckless use and law suits from a few residents. Cleary the positive attributes which these areas provide to the majority of the residents outweigh the few negative issues that may arise.

David Bruhn
62 North Woods Road
Hamden, CT. 06518

I want to pledge my immense support for H.B. 6557. After living in Vermont for the first 18 years of my life, I am constantly searching for the same feelings of peace and serenity that I found in nature there. It is in nature that I am able to find true balance in such a chaotic world. Living in New Haven has made me yearn for time in the woods more than ever because I cannot just step out into a backyard of wilderness anymore. It is vital that we act to protect Connecticut's forests, meadows, trails, parks, and rivers. If I did not have the opportunity to escape into a long weekend of backpacking, an afternoon of hiking, or a day spent in our fresh rivers, I would feel miserable and trapped. It is incredibly imporant to my health and mental

well-being that I am able to get away from the fast pace of city life that is overwhelmingly impersonal, harsh, and unnatural. Please, please support this bill and protect what is left of nature in Connecticut. Thank you for your time.

Morgan Dysinger
1730 State Street
Hamden, CT 06517

As a Connecticut resident and happy canoer, of course I appreciate our open spaces. In addition, as the owner of a small business, I know how much our open spaces contribute to tourism in our state. Many of my customers come from New York and other urban areas to enjoy our trails and streams and wildlife. And I know many of our family's out-of-town guests come to visit because of the easy access to nature in our state. It would be short-sighted not just environmentally but economically to lose any opportunity to preserve our open spaces.

Laura Jarett
Madison, CT

Please approve and pass on the HR 5657 bill that will help towns be protected when letting people use their hiking trails and open space. The state wants to protect at least 20 % of its land in open space. Why should the people not be able to go on this open space.

C. Thomas Paul
813 Summer Hill Road
Madison, CT 06443

The ct legislature must act to help protect the public's access to public land. We have a growing childhood obesity problem in this state and the state must do everything it can to combat this. Ensuring that children have access to open space to get out and exercise and have fun is an important way to do that. And it will help instill in a new generation of children the joys of the outdoors and the importance of being good stewards of our environment.

Thank you from a Mother of two small children
Lydia Williams
31 Soundview Avenue
Madison, ct 06443

It is most important to close the loophole that subjects municipalities to liability from trail use when private landowners, utilities, corporations and the State of Connecticut enjoy limited liability protection when they make their land accessible for the free use and enjoyment of the public. Walking and riding paths provide a major source of enjoyment for those who wish to pursue outdoor recreation. We should encourage the use of open trails as they have proven to be an asset to the appreciation and support of our natural resources.

William H. Walling
15 Tamarac Drive
Madison, CT 06443

The fair and free use of open space is an important part of what makes Connecticut such a wonderful state. Growing up, I made extensive use of the trail systems and would hate to see

them closed for public use due to a legislative loophole. Please do what you can to preserve this fine tradition of natural splendor.

Thank you,
Ethan Giller
Madison, CT

One of the things I love about living on the Connecticut shoreline is that I know, at any moment, I can go for a walk in a beautiful forest, or for a run along the beach, or for a kayak ride right next to my house. It's nice, when life gets a big overwhelming, to be able to simply take a short car ride and see my troubles dwarfed beneath the calm presence of a forest of oak trees, or the slow-moving waters of a river. Without access to spaces such as these, my life would be a lot more stressful (indeed, studies have indicated that natural places have a measurable effect on stress and happiness levels in people). It's important that these natural spaces be kept open to the public as our technological world gets more and more fast-paced.

Geoff Giller
88 River Edge Farms Rd.
Madison, CT 06443

This recreational liability issue is very important to me being an avid outdoors enthusiast. I have enjoyed and continue to enjoy hiking, biking and Cross country skiing on many public, private and state lands. I grew up living across from the MDC reservoir in West Hartford and we enjoyed the available land and used it like our back yard. I continue to use the reservoir to this day for mountain biking and walking and hiking. These resources are municipal land and should remain open for all to enjoy. The same liability should be included in these lands as private land since I know that all those who enjoy the land must be responsible for our actions and risks. We do not pay a fee so we do not accept special treatment as far as liability goes and it is assumed to use at your own risk. I enjoy hiking and biking at other state forests and municipalities throughout the state and It would be a shame if these great nature preserves were closed due to poor decisions from our legislators. Please continue working with State Legislators to restore recreational liability protection to municipalities. This is the same liability protection enjoyed by private landowners and the state of Connecticut, and the same protection that municipalities had enjoyed for 25 years before a court case (Conway v. Wilton) took it away. This world is getting to risk adverse and litigation happy, people need to take charge of their own actions and consequences and assume responsibility for their choices and sometimes unanticipated negative results. You cant protect everyone from any unforeseen mistake.

Theodore Strickland
25 laurel Crest Rd
Madison, Ct 06443

Towns and "quasi" Towns organizations absolutely need the same legal protection against lawsuits afforded private and state property when it comes to recreational and educational use of trails on their land.

The recent lawsuit regarding a woman striking a gate on a trail and then awarded 3 million dollars in damages defies common sense and reveals a major weakness in our present system of laws designed to protect property owners of such offensive action.

Folks need to exercise and interact with the natural world for spiritual wellbeing. Without appropriate laws this will be denied folks as land not covered by legal protection will be closed to the public.

Please pass this needed and appropriate House Bill.

Don Rankin, M.D.
8 Warpas Road
Madison, Ct 06443

I am writing in support of H.B. 6557. If private landowners, corporations, land trusts, and the State, all have liability protection under regulations adopted in the 1970's, it's seems foolish to exclude municipalities from those same protections, after all most people enjoy open space on a local level, and only occasionally venture out to more exotic destinations. Some of our most prized land is owned publicly, expressing a long held American value in the natural world. That freedom is healthy not only for the body, but is well recognized as emotionally and spiritually re-creative as well. We need to preserve what natural outdoor opportunities we have. In fact, in this highly technical age, we need to encourage more outdoor activities, not add to the obstacles that keep us bottled up inside.

Let's vote for a healthy, vibrant citizenry, poised for future challenges, connected to it's heritage. In doing so we will encourage a respect not only for our world, but consequently for it's institutions, and populace as well.

Incidentally; gratefully my family has grown up in an urban setting, bordering rural areas where the opportunity to roam still exists, as it did while I was young. This is a priceless gift we would like to see continue. We are involved in both enjoying and protecting natural resources. We know this comes at a cost, and believe a way can be found to equitably preserve this valuable freedom for present and future generations.

Let's brainstorm!!

David James
11 Carl St.
Meriden, CT

For years I had been surrounded only by office cubicles, and no windows to look out of to take a break to notice a tree blooming, see a bird or to know whether or not I would be walking out into a storm. I knew no other world beyond the Merritt Parkway traffic in my long commutes from Meriden to Norwalk and Stamford and I never even knew which river was running from one town to another. My only awareness of wildlife was when traffic was at a stand still for hours due to a deer or other animal that had been killed along the roadway that morning. It never even occurred to me what might be driving the wildlife out of the woods.

Imagine 20 years of just coming and going in that environment with no awareness to the wonders of just getting outside to take a walk. Then something wonderful happened – I discovered there was an entire “outside” world available to me that included activities I hadn’t even considered I could take part in.

Now, at 65 years old I can tell which bird is singing, and even name a few trees. I have learned to swim and sweep row allowing me to race down the Housatonic River; I learned to paddle a canoe and kayak adding the ability to race down the Quinnipiac River. Today, I own my own kayak take walks on our beautiful trails and know the difference between a hawk and an

eagle.

All this, so simple, right there in front of me – all FREE – Now that I have discovered all these wonderful avenues that add quality to my life, relieve my stress and simply put me in a better frame of mind everyday; I can't imagine not having access to launch my kayak or to be able to walk along a trail.

Ginny Chirsky

President, Quinnipiac River Watershed Association

127 South Vine Street

Meriden, CT 06451

As a walker, trail runner and mountain biker - and as a veteran, tax payer and long-time resident of Connecticut - I consider free and open access to publicly-owned parks, forest and trails one of the best part of living in the state and want that free and open access to be available for my children, grandchildren and succeeding generations. That access is gravely threatened by what I consider frivolous lawsuits from people injured on public lands while conducting activities that would be considered somewhat risky if done in their own backyard. As a mountain biker, I have fallen many times on public trails - it's part of riding a bike - and I have likewise fallen while practicing in my own yard. I have twisted an ankle running on public trails - and done the same in my own yard. Walking or riding a bike, whether on woodland trails or a paved road, carries a slight element of risk, and to engage in such an activity should be to understand that risk, to accept it - and to take responsibility for it. And to allow a court to award damages to someone engaging in such activity - as the award to the biker injured in West Hartford - seems to say "No one is responsible for anything..." and to countenance the most dangerous of activities in the belief that if the perpetrator is injured he or she has a right to sue someone, anyone, for an injury they brought on themselves. There are cases, of course, where a municipality or government body might be at fault - if persons are injured when a badly-bolted grandstand collapses, they may have cause to sue, because they expect that such equipment will be well-maintained - but to allow people to sue for twisting an ankle while walking a public trail or falling off their own mountain bike or running into a gate across a trail is essentially a threat to the rights of every American to have access to public land. If someone falls off a grandstand while intoxicated at a UConn game, is that UConn's fault? If someone cuts a foot on clamshell at Hammonasett Beach, or if they are badly sunburned, should the state be liable? If the courts permit these kinds of awards - even to accept hearing them perhaps - the reaction may well be the closing of such lands to anything, the closing of parks, of high school ballfields. The possibilities are all too real - and too horrible to contemplate.

William J. Earls

1233 Millbrook Road

Middletown, CT 06457

I was appalled to hear that we have such a system in place that enables people to sue for such irresponsible reasons and one that requires defending the very activities we need for our betterment. It is even more shocking to think there is a possibility that we may not have access to these wonderful spaces.

My family and I would be devastated if we were unable to enjoy access to our forests, meadows, trails, parks and rivers. These are God-given spaces where we can connect with nature

to renew our spirit and energies. I wish to share my view that outdoor activities such as hiking, walking, biking, canoeing, swimming are essential to not only to my family's health but the health of our entire community.

Through these activities we are able to benefit from the fresh air and gain the exercise we need in an enjoyable manner. Further, it offers family opportunities for cementing relationships to have excursions together and it is far healthier than going to an indoor gym! Fresh air and oxygen is a rare commodity these days and every resident should have access to forested areas to relax and recharge. Nature has supplied us all we need to maintain a healthy life and we know the many benefits of exercise to human health.

As a nation we have been pressing for improvements to our healthcare system. Putting these areas out of bounds to us would be working in complete opposition to this. It would be tantamount to condemning my family and an entire society to lethargy, ill-health and depression. I have a grandchild and would hate for her to grow up without knowing the wonder of these activities. I would fight tooth and nail to preserve access of these precious spaces and sport.

Annaita Gandhi

28 Brainard Avenue

Middletown, CT 06457

Connecticut is a state of many blessings. The natural beauty of our woods, waterways and views from both hill tops and onto Long Island Sound are among the many simple but inspiring wonders of our state.

Another of our blessings is our setting within the North East megalopolis, which allows us easy transport to major urban areas along the East Coast, as well as the cities within our borders. These urban areas provide world class culture, education and medical facilities.

Living where we do, in the midst of a very busy corridor of traffic and commerce, and with all the blessings of the natural world surrounding us, we are especially blessed. The natural wonders, in a variety of settings, provide their own respite and sanctuary from the busyness of life. Open space legislation provides numerous settings, many within close proximity, for Connecticut residents to enjoy the outdoors and draw inspiration from these many places.

Regretfully, I now learn that some previous legislation may serve to diminish or prohibit these wonderful opportunities for recreation. I strongly urge support of HB 6557, An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands, so that the citizens of Connecticut may use the open spaces to their fullest.

Thank you for your attention to my concern.

David Minnick

46 Tavern Circle

Middletown, CT 06457

I am writing to please ask you to support H.B. 6557 An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands. We need to restore town liability protection.

One of my towns' greatest assets is its parklands. Many of them are adjacent to water company lands, therefore becoming even more valuable for an afternoon's escape from the rigors of everyday life. To not be allowed to use these properties for recreation due to fear of litigation is ridiculous, and a waste of God's resources. To have these lands on which to hike, bike, just stroll for an afternoon is a valuable tool to refresh one's soul, to get away from the un-

natural setting that most of us now live in. We need this kind of break.

Towns, go through great trouble to procure and maintain their parklands, with the additional benefit of increasing property values and quality of life. They should be able to offer their lands for recreation without having to worry about the constant threat of lawsuits.

Please support this bill.

Lois Spence
29 Partridge Dr
Monroe, CT

I live in Monroe, a town with three parks that I visit regularly, mostly to take walks through the woods. Occasionally I visit a park in neighboring Trumbull, again to walk through the woods. Having access to these parks is one of the reasons why I plan to stay in Monroe. In fact, when I moved here with my family eight years ago, walks through the woods in these beautiful parks helped ease the pain of having left a wonderful community in Illinois. As I climbed a hill on a trail through Webb Mountain Park on my first visit there, I remember thinking how lucky I was to have woods like this in my very own town! Without access to these places, a large part of the appeal of living in this area would simply be gone.

Don Parker-Burgard
274 Wheeler Rd.
Monroe, CT 06468

Having had a serious heart attack it is essential that I maintain a regular exercise regimen. There is no better place than in nature to pursue this. I know this is true for other heart patients that I have spoken with. We cite the combination of healthy exercise and the relaxation that occurs as very beneficial when compared to indoor gyms, etc. As more and more individuals and families take to the trails, I believe we will see a healthier population with reduced health care costs as a result. Protecting these space from frivolous lawsuits is essential.

Mike Wallace
66 Easton Rd
Monroe, CT

Please help restore reasonable protections from liability to those landowners who are willing to provide access to and across their lands for passive public recreation such as hiking, and canoe/fishing access.

Michael Sheehan
11 Florence Street
Moosup, CT 06354-1909

I believe it is fair to offer the same legal protections to municipalities as we do to private land owners, corporations, and even the state owned land when it comes to opening up land for the public to use free of charge. If liability protection is not offered, a legal entity has no sensible choice but to restrict access. I believe it is UNFAIR to limit access to recreational resources to the public due to the recklessness and lack of personal responsibility of a select few.

The government should realize that to essentially deprive citizens of outdoor recreation activities would be myopic. The health benefits that people reap from outdoor activities are

huge, and healthy people don't need state funded medical care AND healthy people can work and pay TAXES.

Michael Lefebvre
25 Curtiss Hill Rd
Morris, CT

I feel it is very important that this bill pass. In Connecticut, we are blessed with many beautiful areas to enjoy the outdoors – forests, meadows, trails and parks where we can hike, bike, canoe, or simply be there to enjoy the beauty. Many of these places are on publicly-owned lands, and as the law stands right now, the organizations that own or are in charge of these lands are at great risk of lawsuits.

There is a time when we should be responsible for our own safety, and this situation is a good example.

Some of the lands could become closed if this liability situation is not corrected, and H.B. 6557 would grant that protection.

I urge you to do everything possible to get this bill passed.

Molly McKay
8 Riverbend Drive
Mystic, CT 06355

Protecting the citizens of Connecticut from unnecessary accidents is important. But towns and quasi agencies need protection from law suits where the citizen should have taken responsibility for his/her own actions.

In order to protect the nature trails that are so valuable to Connecticut, legislation is needed to protect them from questionable law suits. These trails are a valuable tool for Connecticut citizen's appreciation of the beauty of the woodlands, wetlands, and meadows. They are also necessary for our next generation to become familiar with the forests, fields and wetlands that are necessary for our survival. Please support legislation helping the nature lovers of Connecticut.

Walter Grant
13 Alden St.
Mystic, Ct.

I enjoy walking and jogging in open space in Connecticut that is owned by MDC and local authorities and open for the public to enjoy. In addition some of this space is used for events in which I love to participate: cross country running. I am taking part in such an event at the MDC reservoir this Saturday April 2nd. I fear that if these landowners, who receive no compensation for opening it, are not protected from liability they may not be able to continue making the space available to the public.

Mr. Robin Fryer
1408 Ponus Ridge
New Canaan, CT 06840

I feel it was a wise law which was passed in 1971 to protect landowners of open space from liability if they allowed the public access and did not charge for it. However, the 1996 court

ruling, which left these protections in place for private landowners, but, on a technicality, removed protections for towns was short-sighted and wrong. We need to restore liability protections for towns so that they will be able to keep their open space available for we, the public, and our children and grandchildren to enjoy! This will save towns money on both insurance premiums and the cost of litigation.

It is so vital to keep town land available to the public for active and passive recreation. In New Canaan where I live, we have organized to fight battles to save our parkland as parkland and not let it be developed. We had a townwide referendum, led by "Hands Off Waveny" when the town wanted to clearcut a lovely wooded area for a big school administration building, and Hands Off Waveny won! That's how much walkers, joggers, birders, and open space advocates care about preserving nature here. Later, a group of us united by the slogan, "Keep Waveny a Park" also organized meetings and a letter writing campaign which stopped Waveny Care Center's attempt to take 18 acres of our glorious Waveny Park for a high- end senior residence complex.

We've lived in New Canaan since 1992 and we' and our kids have derived tremendous pleasure and fitness benefits from jogging, walking, playing soccer, and even sledding in Waveny Park, as well as Irwin Park. We've enjoyed seeing the wildlife, such as deer, there, and the birds. We've picked and eaten wild raspberries. We've explored the trails, as well as the multi-colored fields, with their bluebird houses, thanks to the Audubon Society.. We've picniced in Waveny Park on the fourth of July, and watched the fireworks in the night sky.

It is so vital for all of us to be able to continue to relish our town parks and for children to be exposed to the beauties of nature, so they will grow up to value and protect it! Please support HB 6557! Many thanks.

Lee Grimes Evans
160 Old Kings Hwy.
New Canaan, CT 06840

I can not be at the hearing on 4 April H.B. 6557 when the Judiciary Committee will be meeting. I want a bill that would protect municipalities against liability when they 1) offer free access to their recreational lands and 2) take reasonable precautions to ensure that recreational areas are safe.

Emily Nissley
New Canaan, CT

Please note that I support this bill to restore liability protection for Municipalities so that they are protected in the same fashion as the State of Connecticut, private landowners, utilities and corporations. Please keep our trails open for public use and protect the municipalities at the same time.

Thank you for your support in passing this bill.

Alanna Rathbone
18 Tommys Ln
New Canaan, CT

Easy access to open spaces was one of our reasons for moving to CT. Knowing that in 10 or 15 minutes we could be hiking with our kids was paramount. We are strong believers in

the powers of the combination of being outdoors and exercising as a means to be healthy, both mentally and physically. There is no greater feeling of satisfaction than the one we get after a hike through some of Connecticut's beautiful open spaces. Especially today, when physical activity is waning and obesity is increasing, our state should be leading the charge in getting people outdoors.

Anything that hinders that is a mistake.

Kerri Ahern

37 Newfane Road

New Fairfield, CT

I have lived in the New Haven area for 22 years, and, as a year-round hiker, I have appreciated more and more the importance of maintaining and granting free access to our unrivalled trails and parks. But, inevitably, in light of the Conway v. Wilton ruling of 1996 and the MDC trial within the past year, new restrictions have reduced access to outdoor facilities, for fear of lawsuits and increased insurance premiums. Aside from the disappointment that one hiker may feel at a padlocked gate, the effects of such policies are disastrous for the State's tourism, recreation, and other related industries.

Of greater importance, however, is the harm that such short-sighted actions inflict upon our citizens. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention the obesity rate in Connecticut doubled between 1986 and 2007; the statistics and projections are especially dire for children who live here, with not only obesity, but type two diabetes, arthritis, and cardiovascular diseases expected to reach epidemic proportions unless current trends are reversed. The CDC has detected a "positive correlation" between the time children spend staying inside with TV and video games, and their unhealthy weight gain. The last thing we want to do now is to deny access to the trails, bike paths, swimming pools, and athletic fields for those who need them the most and are least able to demand them. In addition to the human toll that such restrictions will take, the cost to and strain upon our health care system will be staggering. I urge the Legislature to take the initiative to amend current liability laws.

Timothy J. Robinson, PhD

265 College Street, Apt. 11D

New Haven, Connecticut 06510

I join with countless others throughout the State of Connecticut to remind you how important it is to keep in tune with our natural environment in innumerable ways. Please take what ever steps necessary to ensure that towns and the MDC will be able to keep their open space available for all to enjoy.

Thank you.

Louise Fabrykiewicz

281 State St

New London , CT 06320

As a parent I consider it my job to get my child off the couch, out of the car, and out of doors as often as possible. As a family we try to walk and ride our bikes whenever we can. For years Connecticut has lagged behind much of the rest of the country in it's support for non-motorized transportation and recreational opportunities; but lately it's been getting better.

Greenway trails, bike lanes, and sidewalks are springing up all over the state, even out here in western Connecticut.

If municipalities are not protected from liability, I'm afraid that these positive developments will grind to a halt. I strongly support H.B. 6557.

Tom O'Brien
134 Wellsville Ave
New Milford, CT 06776

As Connecticut succumbs more and more to urbanization the ability to experience the outdoors becomes increasingly more precious and, at the same time, more threatened. It is imperative that people retain ready access to hiking and bike trails, canoeing facilities, etc. The "no child left indoors" commitment would be seriously compromised. We need it for our physical, emotional and mental health. Exercise outside a gym is of far greater benefit, plus it does not have the same financial burden. Entire families can spend time together sharing a most marvelous experience. Walking the trails can provide ready lessons of respect for nature, stewardship, and connection with the state's history. Restoring town liability protection is imperative to maintaining quality of life for ourselves and future generations.

Mady Kenny
53 Crestview Drive
Newington, CT 06111

Continued access to our forests, trails, parks, and rivers is a must. Personally I have enjoyed the MDC property in West Hartford for the last 45 years. As a youngster my parents brought me and my siblings there to run through the woods and hike by the lake. Many years later I took my own children, and now they have their own fond memories. My wife & I go most summer weekends to bike or hike. The time we spend there is special. What a loss this would be if we were prohibited from the grounds.

Rick Kuzoian
95 Knollwood Road
Newington, CT 06111

I grew up spending a lot of time outdoors, in the yard, up the street at the edge of a swampy area, in parks, and on outings to more exotic outdoor locations: woods, beaches, mountains... you name it. When I am outside being active, I am undistracted by media, work to do, phone calls. I have a chance to let my mind wander freely without distraction - not necessarily thinking, not focused on an outcome, just letting the thoughts come and observing them. Some people might call this daydreaming, others meditating. It helps me center myself. Sometimes I find the answers to dilemmas. While I am in this state I am often actively engaged in physical activity - walking. My physical, emotional and mental selves come together and I feel very integrated and serene.

I treasure the open space and natural resources available to me, where I can indulge myself in this relaxation. And I feel very sorry for those who have never been introduced to it. I am also concerned that with every space and parcel of land that is developed for use, the natural spaces are dwindling. Through your message I understand that some of the places I like to go may not be available to me, because of concern over liability. That would be a shame. I support

your efforts to protect landowners from lawsuits, and thank you for bringing this to my attention.

Chris Thomas-Melly

190 Eagle Dr,

Newington, CT

I wholeheartly endorse the action that the Sierra Club is taking to protect all parties in providing open spaces for hiking, biking, water sports and other recreational activities. This should be a no-brainer for any rational person but with the legislative bodies we have in CT, it is always an uphill fight. We need to provide as much outdoor recreational as possible for our communities but especially for our children and grandchildren. Hopefully, this year, we can have a start to make CT a better place to live and play.

Robert E. Batson

681 North Mountain Road

Newington, Connecticut 06111-1411

Please add my name to the supporters of HB 6557 bill to return liability protectionn to municipalities for their recreational lands.

HB 6557 passage will encourage more CT towns and cities to protect open lands for recreation and to use the money that would have had to go to insurance into purchasing new lands for recreation and protection.

Madeline Jeffery

657 Pendleton Hill Road

North Stonington, CT 06359

Last weekend, while on a jaunt through the forest, I joked with my fellow hikers that I was there for my treatment and my prescription refill. I am part of a hiking group that explores, photographs, plays, challenges, and teaches each other through our wanderings in the woods. It is a joyous time that cleanses our breath, settles our minds and nourishes our souls, while engaging our bodies in a healthy way. I know for many of us, it recharges us and reconnects us for the days ahead. I am grateful for all my trail moments and it is very important to me that access to open space remains available in Connecticut.

Jennifer Eazarsky

41 Wolfpit Ave. 4B

Norwalk, CT 06851

As someone who has lived in small cities all of my life, it has been important to me to have access to open space and recreational opportunities provided by the cities I have lived in or visited. I have used playgrounds, basketball courts, tennis courts, walking and running trails, picnic tables, softball/baseball fields, strolled on boardwalks, enjoyed concerts on greens and on the newly recreated Parade in downtown New London. My ability to use these municipally owned common spaces has improved my quality of life in ways that are difficult to measure.

I can say that in addition to enjoying myself while using municipally owned and maintained open/recreational space, every time I see other people using these common spaces like the wonderful Mohegan Park in Norwich it lifts my spirits. Providing access to open/recreational space helps contribute to equality. Those of us who do not own acres of

property need places to be in the great outdoors. In case you are not yet aware of this, the more equality a community or society has, the healthier the population is, the more trust there is and many other positive measures (www.equalitytrust.org.uk).

As you know, municipalities are struggling with providing all sorts of services. I would like to see them not be subject to lawsuits that might make them curtail access to open space. Please help them and all of us out by supporting HB 6557, An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands.

Roberta Paro
246A Yantic Street
Norwich, CT 06360

Without question, hiking, biking and getting any kind of exercise outdoors is critical for quality of life - for me, my family, my dogs and my friends. I walk everyday in a park or at the beach for 30 minutes to an hour. Especially during the winter, those walks surrounded by the bounty of mother nature keep my spirits happy and my body invigorated. I know this is true for the many people I see on those daily walks. These walks during the winter morph into canoeing and kayaking during the summer - good to use different muscles to stay young at heart and in good shape - staying healthy as an aside necessitates fewer visits to the doctor and creates less of a drain or dependency on medical insurance - better for the economy. Good health is good for the soul and good for the economy. We need to maintain accessible open space for the general good of all citizens.

Louise Brodman
15 Edgewater Drive
Old Greenwich, CT 06870

I highly advocate maintaining access to trails for hiking, etc. Maintaining open space is important to the health of our environment. Being able to hike, walk, bike, canoe in these areas is important to our health and enjoyment of nature. Seeing the beauty of nature is an inspiration, a form of meditation, exercise....all positive.

Rise Siegel
43 Wellington Dr.
Orange, CT

The inability of towns to be protected from liability arising from public access to open space will essentially shut down all access to town owned open space and eliminate future acquisitions. Many Ct. towns have been proactive in obtaining the remaining open spaces for the future public enjoyment, watershed and wildlife preservation. The benefits to these acquisitions are well documented, and without liability protection, future acquisition will cease to the public's detriment. It is imperative that An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands, become law to restore town liability protection, just as the state, land trusts, corporations and other private landowners have had for years.

James H. Ewen
615 Lambert Rd
Orange, Conn. 06477

Publicly owned land should be open to the public. Unfortunately, if towns and other public entities are susceptible to large judgements against them simply by allowing people access to property then, obviously, the public will soon discover it has greatly reduced access to open space. This loss would be very unfortunate for those of us who love simply being outdoors doing healthy things. But to add insult to injury, no pun intended, it will be our tax dollars which will pay out egregious judgments for one person's lack of foresight or care or accident beyond human control, such as where falling acorns choose to place themselves. Shirley there must be a middle ground available where towns could show reasonable prudence in their oversight of open spaces in exchange for freedom from liability. Thank you for taking the time to listen to my point of view.

John Hughes
52 Lathrop Ave
Pawcatuck, CT 06379

The State of Connecticut has a goal of setting aside 20% of its land as open space lands. The Town of Plainville has endeavored, through State Open Space Acquisition Grants, to help meet that goal. As a small community, we realize the importance of Open Space for quality of life issues. We feel that quality of life creates a positive environment for economic development as well. As we struggle with the state of the economy, it becomes evident that we must do what we can to remove barriers to the use of open space. Development for passive recreation is clearly an expensive undertaking in itself. In addition, reluctant risk management personnel have been the naysayers of public use of public land for good reason: the litigious nature of our society. If public lands can be used at the public's own risk, the quality of life issues we as planner's promote will become easier to program. Economic development potential can increase for towns such as Plainville who can then develop passive recreational uses without fear of litigation and increased costs associated with insurance premiums.

Of course, we realize that owners of public lands set aside for public use must exercise diligence to maintain the facilities in a safe and reasonable fashion; failure to do so should not be tolerated.

Passage of this legislation is good for the Town of Plainville and the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Mark DeVoe
AICP, Director, Planning and Economic Development
One Central Square
Plainville, CT

Municipalities' lack of protection from personal injury lawsuits is an arbitrary vestige of a small sample of events. The disparity versus the protections enjoyed by states, land trusts, and individuals is intellectually indefensible. H.B. 6557 is a simple fix to this legislative anomaly. Anyone who claims differently must have a personal stake in the issue and therefore be conflicted.

Jake DeSantis
30 Mark Twain Lane
Redding, CT 06896

I am writing in support of the Sierra Club's and other's efforts to legislatively restore town liability protection (through H.B. 6557), just as the state, land trusts, corporations and other private landowners have had for years. A successful legislative effort in this regard will enable Connecticut towns to keep open space available for the public to enjoy. The towns also will save money on insurance premiums and the costs of litigation.

Douglas P. Taber
11 Parsons Lane
Redding, CT 06896

When the public uses municipal lands, and a frivolous lawsuit is filed by a person using those lands, it could cost the State thousands of dollars of which the state does not have. By indemnifying the State with liability protections we could keep these open spaces open and available to our residents.

Victoria Yolen
9 E Farm Lane
Ridgefield, CT 06877

I find it difficult to believe, in the face of all the evidence of the health and mental benefits that we enjoy when we have access to open space (not to mention the country's obesity epidemic) that anyone would not want to support a town's ability to keep these places available to the public. As a member of the Ridgefield Open Space Association, I spent considerable time and effort convincing the townspeople to vote to save the 458 acre Bennett's Pond property, which is now part of the state park system. The people now deserve to enjoy this area that cost them tax dollars to acquire. We should not be punishing the many in this way to prevent possible lawsuits by the very few.

On a personal level, I spend as much of my free time as I can in open space, and it would diminish my quality of life significantly not to have this right.

Please vote to pass this legislation now.

Susan Baker
163 High Ridge Ave.
Ridgefield, CT

As a long time open space advocate in my community, I urge you to support H.B. 6557 to protect towns from liability on open space lands. The importance of the recreational use of open space cannot be overstated. It provides needed exercise, escape from the pressures of our lives, and allows the public to appreciate the wonders of nature. Public support for the preservation of open space land largely depends on the public's ability to use it for recreational purposes. If towns are forced to close their open spaces to avoid liability, public support for the acquisition and protection of future parcels will effectively end.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ellen Burns
President Ridgefield Open Space Association
297 Great Hill Road
Ridgefield, CT 06877

The Town of Ridgefield has 2500 acres of open space with over 40 miles of trails. This land has been collected over many years through purchase and donation for the enjoyment of all. To have it threatened with closing because of the threat of liability would be a tragedy.

Benjamin Oko
Chair, Ridgefield Conservation Commission
11 barlow mountain road
Ridgefield, Ct.

I moved to CT a year ago and was delighted to be able to hike along some of the most beautiful scenery in this country. Hiking, biking, and sharing a walk with a friend along the rivers and lakes in this state is a wonderful and unforgettable experience as well as essential to my mental and physical health. In a month my son will be flying to CT from California. He, at 24 years old, deserves to be able to walk the woods in this state not only in May but next year, in 10 years, and even when he is 60, 70, and 80 years old if he so chooses. Please do all that you can to make sure that legislation to preserve unfettered access to our natural resources in this great state of Connecticut is funded adequately and without restrictions dominated by fear of liability issues. Our generation, my son's generation, and the generations to come MUST be able to continue to enjoy their beauty with total freedom. Mother Nature is a gift to all of us as well as a healing and healthy place. Her meadows, rivers, lakes, parks, and nature trails are meant to be seen, appreciated, and used without fear of liability issues that threaten their access at this time.

Roberta Immordino
52 No. Main Street
Sharon, CT 06069

At the Chariman of the Shelton Trails Committee, I want to lend my voice to the support of extending existing liability protection for free use of open space to municipalities. In the past 10 years, Shelton has expanded our trails network from 1 to 15 miles through the work of volunteers, grants and city funding. City officials are resisting further expansion due to the award of millions of dollars to a woman bike rider. We need the same liability protection afforded to the Shelton Land Trust and individuals get that permit the public free use for passive recreation.

Bill Dyer
20 Beverly Ln
Shelton, CT 06484

In a time where economic stress and political turmoil are the order of the day, here in the nutmeg state, and across this increasingly polarized nation, there is one certainty that I can think of to combat tension within our society. I call it "unplugging". You may call it anything you like. For me, unplugging is the ability to hike, bike, or paddle through a world where cell phones, bank statements, and political angst are carried away on the wings of serenity. While I greatly enjoy my rambles through the White Mountains of New Hampshire, or slicing through whitecaps and the invigorating spray of mother ocean on my countenance, practicality (and budgetary considerations) require that I unplug closer to home more often than not. As a working member of CFPA (family hike leader and Trail Manager for the Ragged Mountain Preserve), The

QRWA, and the New Haven Hiking Club, and as a citizen of this state, I am appalled at the attempts to close down the MDC properties to the public, especially as a salve to bureaucracy, and thanks to some technicality that should be easy to clear up. I will not speak on my thoughts of the rider who, through her own irresponsible behavior, would endeavor to keep all others from enjoying the same trails she did, or the foolish decision to enable her actions with a monetary award. It is not the avid outdoors-men and women for whom I speak today, they understand the value of this fight. It is for the uninitiated and the as-yet-to-discover folk who will come to find the value in unplugging themselves from their labors, laptops, and largess, and hopefully, when they are ready, these properties will be there for them to discover the beauty and serenity that is around them, and that, through avarice and greed, might be taken away from them before they realize the value.

Please do not allow what little Shangri-La we have left be taken away by bureaucratic inaction.

Ralph Riello
South Meriden, CT

Please preserve public access to areas, such as the West Hartford Reservoir, in the interest of the communities health, family, and well being. Access to these lands are important to our community, and me personally. I first started mountain biking over 18 years ago with my soon to be wife at the West Hartford Reservoir. We've enjoyed biking, running, and cross-country skiing there year round every year since, even though we've moved a half dozen times. This has kept us active and healthy in an era, where public health is a challenge. For the hundreds of people that utilize this property daily, you could not conceive of a better health initiative, even if you gave away free gym memberships. My two sons have enjoyed the property since they were born, whether being towed on our bikes, on their trikes, and now their bikes. It's truly a special place that will hold memories for the rest of my life, my children's lives, and their children, in addition to keeping them healthy.

Thank you,
Noah Toth
112 Meadow Brook Rd
Southbury, CT 06488

With regard to the public hearing on Monday, April 4 regarding HB 6557, "An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands," affording the protections to landowners through this bill is important to me because, as a runner, I have been directly impacted when landowners such as the MDC are hit with liability judgements that others are not. Because of lack of protection, the MDC, rightly so, had closed access to their resevoirs to runners and running events; there has been consideration to continuing this use restriction. This is sad when so peaceful and natural a place like a resevoir is cut off to people seeking to do healthful things because of worries about litigation. I would like this bill approved so that all landowners are protected, not just private owners and towns.

Allen Horner
216 Belleview Avenue
Southington, CT 06489-3734

My family and I enjoy getting out for biking, hiking, and exploring. We're always looking for fun and educational experiences for the kids to get them unplugged from computer and video and get them some physical fitness.

Dan Wilensky
Southington, CT

I live in Southington CT and over the last several years our town has made a big commitment to the purchase of Open Space for the benefit of our citizens. It would be a shame if a technicality put a stop to such positive progress. Please implement a bill that protects towns from liability and protects our open spaces.

Thank you
Sue Kienle
46 Quail Hollow Dr,
Southington, CT 06489

Dear Judiciary committee: the ability for landowners to have peace of mind when they allow recreational opportunities on their land is paramount to the enhancing the quality of life for Connecticut's citizens that enjoy outdoor experiences. Please restore the limited liability rules for landowners and landholders that allow recreation on their properties. With escalating costs associated with litigation, we must do everything we can to help keep the land available to recreationists by limiting the liability for landowners that graciously allow folks to enjoy the outdoor experience on their lands. Please restore the protection from liability to landowners and thus encourage more land to be available for outdoor experiences for our citizens.

Peter Picone
157 Meriden Waterbury Road
Southington, CT 06489

I have been hiking and camping since working to restore town liability protection, just as the state, land trusts, corporations and other private landowners have had for years.

When we succeed, towns and the MDC will be able to keep their open space. I support H.B. 6557 An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands.

Lee Chevron
223 Foxwood Rd
Stamford, CT 06903

One of the things I appreciate most about living in NE Connecticut is the easy access that I have to woodland trails and public lands. I have always stayed fit by jogging, walking, and biking and find that in my 60's this requires increasingly more dedication on my part to maintain. Having public trails nearby that are easy and quick to access makes it possible. This will be one of the main reasons for me to continue living here when I retire.

Roger Chaffin
Department of Psychology U-1020 University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT 06269-1020

To say we are appalled by the idea of someone suing because they slipped on an acorn is

putting it mildly. They'd better never come to our yard, which is littered with acorns in the fall!

We hope the legislature will show common sense and return protection from such frivolous lawsuits to the towns and agencies affected.

Roswell and Gretchen Hall

62 Crane Hill Rd

Storrs, CT

As a lifelong resident of Connecticut and a land owner I must tell you how I cherish open land. I hike my land daily with my dogs and Grandchildren. I encourage others to walk their dogs or hike and even ride ATVs. Land is to be enjoyed by all. I regularly seek other places to hike, most recently along the Scantic River and the Metacomet Trail. Open space is good for my soul, it removes me from the daily tension of running a business and raising a family. Without this my life would be bleak, my health and job performance would suffer. I encourage you to help keep land open for all people. We have not inherited this land, merely borrowed it from our children.

Marty Deren

1077 Halladay Ave W

Suffield, CT. 06078

Over the years my family and I used and enjoyed public lands for ice skating, hiking, playing ball, and sledding - Use of public lands and any doing any sort of activity has an inherent risk. No city or town should be liable for the proper use of their lands.

Bob Carr

43 Pine Hill Rd,

Thomaston, CT

I cannot fathom why this simple legislation to save access to our open spaces is so difficult for Hartford to get done. Conservationists have long supported the public's use of our natural resources. People need to be more active and fit- and trails and woodland areas are an inexpensive and attractive way to get exercise. Even Conservatives have long complained that superfluous and excessive lawsuits are a waste of taxpayers resources-- so who is left to oppose such a simple, practical law to protect our towns?

In my area, The Pequonock River Trail runs from Bridgeport all the way to Newtown- it serves thousands of people every week. It is a lovely, shaded rail-to-trails environment fit for joggers, bikers, and dog walkers. It would be inconceivable to have access denied to us because of naturally occurring items like fallen branches or acorns posed a risk to the town of a lawsuit. Please pass this protection now.

Tim Ryan

530 Church Hill Rd.

Trumbull, CT 06611

We support HB 6557. People who use public or state lands should be responsible for themselves. They should not expect others to shoulder the responsibility for their ignorance or negligence.

Cathy Rubin Jim levola

138 Pendleton Hill Rd,
Voluntown, Ct 06384

I've been hiking beautiful trails of West Hartford Reservoir few times a week for many years.

It's extremely important to restore recreational liability protection to municipalities. Residents of Connecticut and beyond should have free access to MDC recreational lands. Please close the liability loop hole and keep the trails open for all of us to enjoy.

Luda Gooper
43 Sequin Rd,
West Hartford, CT

I strongly encourage the legislature to restore town liability protection so that Connecticut town's can continue offering access to open spaces. Having access to open spaces, such as the resevoir in West Hartford, is very important for the health and well-being of residents. For example, in West Hartford, the walking path around the resevoir allows thousands of residents to have a safe place to walk, run, and bike away from cars and traffic. It is a place that families can bring children to enjoy fresh air, trees and water and without access to this trail, there are limited places for people to enjoy the outdoors. I personally use several of the local town paths, parks, and open spaces to run, walk, and bike. I think it is crucial for town's to be able to continue providing access to these types of open spaces.

Claire L Zick
77 Beverly Road
West Hartford, CT

I would say that I live in West Hartford not far from the RT44/MDC reservoir, and have walked and hiked those MDC trails year-round for 40+ years, and would be very unhappy if they were to become off limits. Having such pleasant outdoor areas nearby enhances the attractiveness of living in the Hartford area.

Peter Herrmann
35 Wiltshire Lane
West Hartford, CT 06117-2748

My family and I feel that it is extremely important that we continue to have free access to our Town and State parks, forests, waterways and other open spaces. Free access is a physical and mental health issue as well as a "quality of life" issue. This access allows us to use these wonderful elements in our Towns and State to walk, hike, bike, boat and enjoy all that nature has to offer us. Any diminishment of these rights of free access to Town and State open space properties will certainly lessen the attractiveness of living in the State of Connecticut.

When individuals enter and use Town and State open spaces, they must understand that they will be held responsible for their own actions and their own safety. In your position as Legislative and Political Chair of the CT Sierra Club, please take whatever steps are necessary to help convince our Lawmakers that H.B. 6557, An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands should be enacted.

Jim Sutton

25 Northbrook Drive
West Hartford, CT 06117

It is of the upmost importance that public access to recreation on municipal lands be maintained. Recreational access is one of the benefits of living near to such a large parcel of land. For example, I have chosen to live in West Hartford because of the proximity of MDC lands to my home. It not only brings up the value of my home, it keeps me and my family healthy as we use the lands 2-3 times a week. On sunny days the parking lots are full of people and families who take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to walk and bike the trails. Even on rainy days you will find people out and about getting fresh air and exercise. It seems especially important with America facing an obesity crisis that open places to exercise be a part of our community structure. Please see to it that recreational liability protection to municipalities is maintained.

Sonia Plumb, Herb Emanuelson, Alex Emanuelson
West Hartford, CT

I urge you to restore liability protection for all Connecticut towns and quasi-public agencies such as the MDC, just as state and private landowners have. I hike or ski on trails and roads on a variety of public and land trust owned open space areas almost every day in and around the Farmington Valley. I feel fortunate that these special places exist where I can get outside to appreciate nature, birdwatch and exercise in peaceful, undisturbed settings. These daily outings are not an option for me - they are mandatory for my mental and physical health and a connection to the natural world. In our densely populated and ever-sprawling state, it would be an injustice to deny public access to any of our open space resources.

Each one is cherished by its local citizens. I have been recreating in the MDC woodlands for over forty years and cannot contemplate West Hartford without access to that beloved sanctuary.

It would be tragic if any municipal or MDC owned lands were closed due to liability issues. Please restore liability protection to our towns and public agencies.

Thank you.

Richard Stanley
5 Sherwood Ln
West Simsbury, CT 06092

I fully support the initiative to extend protection to towns for use of open space, akin to what is already in place for other landowners of open space.

I am a Selectman in Weston. Our community places a premium on maintenance of open space and public access thereto. If litigation were a threat, our ability to continue ensuring access to our town's beauty, enshrined in our Plan of Conservation and Development and in the minds and hearts of the people who have moved to our town, would be called into serious question.

Dave Muller
221 Weston Rd.
Weston, CT

I deem this bill most important so as to continue to make available the vital recreational opportunities to our citizens on state lands.

William N. Wallace

7 Sprucewood Lane

Westport, Ct 203259 5765.

The Board of Directors of The Friends of Sherwood Island State Park support H.B. 6557 to protect against liability when they offer free access to recreational lands, and take precautions that recreational areas are safe.

Sheila C. O'Neill

President, Friends of Sherwood Island State Park

Westport, CT

After a busy day with people and worldly affairs, I need to find my inner balance by being with nature. Access to the woods or water, by biking, swimming, paddling or hiking brings me to a point of inner peace so I can better cope with the people-world again. These activities provide me with a fun way of exercising and maintaining my health. I also learn a lot by observing nature and researching more about the flora and fauna that I see. Because I know more, I care more and want to preserve these areas and access for the community. I feel that such outdoor experiences in as natural an area as possible makes me a better person. I sometimes wonder that, if we had more access and educated more people about enjoying the outdoors, maybe the world would be a happier, calmer place.

Clarinda Higgins

9 Madeline Ave

Westport, CT 06880

It is of utmost importance in my life to have access to local forests, trails, parks and rivers. Hiking is the greatest joy and peace. Please protect these with voting for HB 6557 An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands.

Diane Cady

21 Danbury Av

Westport, CT. 06880

My family which includes my husband, and two children ages 8 and 11 enjoy hiking, walking and cross-country skiing in many of our states' public lands. We frequent resevoirs, rails to trails paths, and many other open spaces owned by municipalities or quasi-public agencies. We spent this past snowy winter cross-country skiing in a myriad of beautiful parks and preserved lands.

I am very concerned that if municipalities are not immune to lawsuits that many of these wonderful open spaces will be closed to public use. Every year we lose acres of woodland, forests and fields as they are developed for housing or industry. It is especially important that we preserve the open space that we do have.

I urge you to support legislation that would protect our open space by allowing municipalities immunity from lawsuits.

Tracey McDougall

45 Nott Street
Wethersfield, Connecticut

I am writing to document my strong support for H.B. 6557 An Act Concerning Liability for the Recreational Use of Lands. I use public lands regularly for walks in the woods. This provides me with exercise and a peacefulness I do not get in more populated venues. I urge the committee to support this legislation and allow the public the continued use of these lands.

Royal Graves
21 Prospect Street
Wethersfield, CT 06109

My wife and I are in our early 70's and enjoying our retirement in Connecticut. An important part of our retirement is the access to walking and cross country skiing trails and other outdoor activities in our state. We understand that there is currently no protection for liability for towns and quasi agencies in regard to open space that is so needed by ourselves and others who enjoy the great outdoor environment in CT. We do hope that the legislature will restore the town liability protection that will enable us (and others living or visiting our state) to have access to the open spaces that will contribute a great deal to the quality of life that we have in Connecticut. Please restore town liability protection.

Michael and Susan Cutlip
42 Carey St.
Willimantic, CT 06226

Please keep up the Sierra Club's efforts to insure that open spaces are maintained in our towns. Development has eaten up so much land and we need to do whatever is possible to preserve the rest...for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren. These spaces are necessary for the enjoyment they provide to individuals and families, as well as for the health benefits derived from walking, hiking, cycling, boating and other activities.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of Connecticut residents.

Ellen Kapustka, PhD
50 Ruscoe Road
Wilton, Connecticut

As avid outdoor people, my wife and I cherish the availability of open spaces and the ability to get out and hike public lands. I am a nature photographer and would be very disappointed if I was not able to have access to public lands where I find a great deal to photograph. If liability protection is not given to towns and the MDC then I will be disappointed at not having the freedom to walk the land in search of that one fabulous photograph.

I personally believe that individuals should take responsibility for their own actions and not look for legal recourse just because they slipped and fell on an acorn. Our society is far too litigious and this needs to change. If people were more responsible for their own actions, then we would not need liability protection for our towns and the MDC.

I encourage the legislature to restore liability protection to towns and quasi public agencies. And I also suggest that individuals consider being more responsible for their own actions.

Doug Miller
143 Holabird Ave.
Winsted, CT 06098

The MDC is very important to my physical health as well as hundreds of others of us
that walk these trails. It would be a huge mistake to close them down.

Sandra Cox
21 Clubhouse Drive
Woodbury, Ct 06798
